

REMARKS

This reply is in response to the Office Action dated 02/11/04. In the Office Action, the Examiner has rejected claims 1, 2, 17-19, 22-26, and 29-32 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,124,031 to Mensink et al. (the Mensink patent), rejected claims 49-51 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,580,947 to Thompson (the Thompson patent), has rejected claims 9, 10, 39, and 40 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Mensink patent, and claims 53 and 54 claim 12-16, 20, 21, 27, 28, and 42-46 over the Mensink patent in view of the Thompson patent, and claims 53 and 54 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Mensink patent in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,722,998 to Prutchi et al. (the Prutchi patent). Additionally, the Examiner has stated that claims 3-8, 11, 33-38, 41, 47, 48, and 52 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include the limitations of their respective base claims and any intervening claims. Accordingly, the application and the Examiner's comments have been closely reviewed and the specification has been amended to correct minor errors noted during this review. Additionally, claims 1, 2, 9, 10, 12-32, 39-40, 42-46, 49-51, and 53-54 have been canceled without prejudice, claims 3-5, 8, 11, 33-35, 38, 41, 47-48, and 52 have been amended consistent with the guidance provided by the Examiner (with some minor clarifying language to more clearly recite the present invention), and dependent claims 55-63 have been added to more fully claim the allowable subject matter. No new matter has been inserted and Applicant further contends that all of the claims presently presented are within the scope of the allowable subject matter indicated by the Examiner. Following this amendment, claims 3-8, 11, 33-38, 41, 47, 48, 52, and 55-63 are pending. Reexamination and reconsideration are respectively requested.

It is additionally noted pursuant to additional discussions that occurred post filing of the present application, papers are included with this amendment to add an additional inventor.

In view of all of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the pending claims 3-8, 11, 33-38, 41, 47, 48, 52, and 55-63 are allowable as amended in the present application. Reexamination and allowance are respectfully requested.

If for any reason the Examiner finds the application other than in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to call the undersigned attorney at the Los Angeles, California telephone number (661) 775-3995 to discuss the steps necessary for placing the application in condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

3/09/04
Date

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